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MS 645 Cross Cultural Communication of the Gospel

Robert A. Danielson

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Syllabus

Course: MS645 X1 (SP 2009)

Title: Cross Cultural Communication of the Gospel

Hours: 3.00

Published: Yes, on 11/18/2008

Prerequisites:

IS501

Department: Christian Mission

Faculty:



Email:

Office:

SPO:

Meetings:

During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 Online via ExL.

Maximum Registration: 22

Catalog Description: Studies in the literature of inter-cultural communication, with attention to understanding cultural contexts and barriers, with applications to Christian witness across and within cultures. Meets with MB720 on the Kentucky Campus.

Objectives:

IS501X1

MS645X1

Cross-Cultural Communication of Christianity

Spring 2009

(3 Credits)

Professor: Dr. Robert Danielson

Address: 204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390

Email: robert_danielson@asburyseminary.edu

Office phone: 859-858-2351

Preliminary Syllabus (November 2008)

May be amended prior to the start of class

Welcome and Greetings

Communication is a complex process, but it is one which we do every day of our lives. Communication is especially important in ministry, but whether you are in ministry here in the United States or on the other side of the world, the communication process becomes much more complicated when you add in cultural differences between the communicator and the audience. In our rapidly shrinking world and with the growth of globalization, the need to communicate cross-culturally is even greater than ever. With the growth of immigration to the United States and the rapid movement of these immigrants into more rural areas, there is no place which is not touched by this need. In rural schools, teachers are faced with children from homes and cultures vastly different than the classroom of ten or twenty years ago. Likewise ministry is

frequently expanding to include Spanish worship services and ministries all over the country. Cross-cultural communication has always been a dilemma for the missionary who faces the challenge of communicating the gospel to people who see and experience the world in very different ways. We want to explore ways we can do this, both in the U.S. and in the wider world around us, so that we can be better prepared to share the Gospel message with those around us!

Personal Introduction

Dr. Robert A. Danielson
Adjunct Professor
E-mail: robert_danielson@asburyseminary.edu
Office phone: 859-858-2251
Office Fax 859-858-2330
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390
B.A. (Anthropology) Florida State University 1991
M.A. (Anthropology) McGill University (Montreal, Canada) 1994
Ph.D. (Intercultural Studies) Asbury Theological Seminary 2005

I grew up in a family of three generations of missionaries and Methodist ministers, but with a passion for understanding how culture works. After getting my M.A. in Montreal, Canada, I taught English in a remote part of the People's Republic of China for two years. After I returned, I married my wife, a native of El Salvador in Central America, which has taught me more about cross-cultural communication than any class ever did. I have also traveled and done short-term mission in other places, including the Philippines and Honduras.

I will try to use illustrations and examples from all over the world during the course of this class. However, my main geographical areas of experience are China and Latin America, so you can expect more illustrations from these areas. I have chosen in large part to use examples and focus on the peoples of Latin America and immigrants when I wish to illustrate a topic. I have three main reasons for this type of bias:

1. I have a passion for this geographical area and its people, and with my wife being an immigrant, I have had a good deal of exposure to the immigration experience. My knowledge of this area is currently the most up-to-date, and therefore will be more accurate than if I draw on other areas and subjects.
2. By 2050, the various predictions from census figures claim that 25% or more of the population in the U.S. will be Hispanic. This is a trend which will affect all communities and all churches in the U.S. and those who will be in ministry need to recognize this shifting cultural reality and prepare for its effects.
3. As the global church shifts from its traditional center in the North and West to the South and East, we need to be listening to the theological voice of the church in these areas. They are growing and we are not. They have something to teach us, if we will listen. Latin America has one of the most developed and coherent voices from this growing part of the church.

Course Description

Studies in the literature of inter-cultural communication, with attention to understanding cultural contexts and barriers, with applications to Christian witness across and within cultures. How we communicate can radically affect our Christian witness, for good and for bad. This class explores the process of communication between people of different cultural contexts. We will examine multiple factors which dictate why we communicate the way we do, as well as those factors which lead other people to respond the way they do. We will examine ways to overcome these natural obstacles as well as how these factors affect the Christian witness of the Gospel. Participants in this course will explore how the church, as well as individuals might better communicate the message of Christ to others.

We will consider the following questions, along with others which may arise:

1. How do people communicate?
2. Why is culture an obstacle to effective communication?
3. How can these cultural barriers be overcome?
4. How can the Church more effectively communicate the Gospel across cultural barriers?

Sometimes these questions may challenge you and your accepted view of the world, but if you are willing to step back and try to see the world as other people do and leave ethnocentric ideas behind, you will have a better view of how God works in the world.

Basic Structure of the Course

There are three modules in this course. The first covers some of the basics of communication and the key terms and ideas involved in understanding cross-cultural communication. The second module examines how culture affects communication and looks at the barriers which it creates. In addition, we will look at cross-cultural conflict and ways to avoid it in ministry. The third module looks at specific contexts where cross-cultural communication is important. These include gender and social roles, cross-cultural communication within the U.S. and immigrant communities, and teaching in a cross-cultural setting.

Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to...

1. Articulate an understanding of the basics of communication especially in cross-cultural context.
2. Identify the major problem areas of cross-cultural communications where most misunderstandings occur.
3. Evaluate various aspects of a culture in terms of their cultural worldview and practices of communication.
4. Be able to critique one's own cultural context and evaluate another culture's possible weaknesses and strengths in light of communication theory.
5. Articulate possible actions for Christians to take to more effectively communicate the gospel message across cultural boundaries.
6. Exhibit a heightened sense of awareness and commitment to cross-cultural communication within various ministry opportunities in our globalized world.

Required Texts

Donovan, Vincent
2003 *Christianity Rediscovered*. Orbis Press.

Elmer, Duane
1994 *Cross-Cultural Conflict*. InterVarsity Press.

Jandt, Fred E.
2007 *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*. Fifth edition. Sage Publications, Inc.

Lingenfelter, Judith and Sherwood
2003 *Teaching Cross-Culturally*. Baker Academic.

Richardson, Don
2007 *Peace Child*. YWAM Pub.

Additional Resources

Additional audio-visual, and electronic media materials will be used through out the class. These may include but are not limited to, short written lectures, recordings of speakers at Asbury Theological Seminary chapels, and online articles or video clips which can be accessed from your computer.

Module Agenda

Each week we will begin with a scripture passage dealing with some issue of cross-cultural communication. These scriptures will be in a forum format for you to respond with your own thoughts. Each week there will also be a cross-cultural communication problem posted. You should try and figure out what the problem is and how it might be understood. Answers will then be posted later in the week. Often, there will be written lectures which you are welcome to comment on or ask questions about.

For each week there will be discussion questions posted for your response. You will post a response to each question and then also respond to at least two other responses by your classmates.

Course Modules

Introduction and Organization

Week 1: Introduction to Cross-Cultural Communication February 11-18, 2009

Reading: **Peace Child** by Don Richardson

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by Feb. 18, 2008

Module One: The Basics of Cross-Cultural Communication

Week 2: What is Culture anyway? February 18-25, 2009

Reading: Jandt's Introduction to Intercultural Communication Chap. 1

Week 3: What is Communication and why is it important? February 25 - March 3, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 2

Week 4: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication March 3-10, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 5

Module Two: Cultural Factors in Communication

Week 5: High Context vs. Low Context Cultures March 10-17, 2009

Reading: **Cross-Cultural Conflict** by Elmer

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by March 17, 2009

Reading: Jandt's Introduction to Intercultural Communication Chap. 3

Week 6: Cultural Barriers in Communication March 17-24, 2008

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 4 and 6

Week 7: Additional Cultural Factors Affecting Communication March 24-31, 2009

Reading: **Christianity Rediscovered** by Donovan

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by March 31, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 7

Week 8: Spring Reading Break March 31 - April 7, 2009

Week 9: Midterm Exam April 7-14, 2009

Module Three: The Cultural Context for Communication

Week 10: Roles and Gender in Communication April 14-21, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 10

Week 11: The U.S. Approach to Communication April 21-28, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 8 and 9

Week 12: Globalization and Immigration: Its Affect on Communication April 28 - May 5, 2009

Reading: Jandt's **Introduction to Intercultural Communication** Chap. 12

Week 13: Teaching Across a Cultural Divide May 5-12, 2009

Reading: **Teaching Cross-Culturally** by Lingenfelter

Assignment: Reflection Paper due by May 12, 2009

Week 14: Conclusion: Taking Christ into a Different Culture May 12-19, 2009

Final Project due by May 12, 2009

Assignments

1. Four reflection papers (20%): One paper for each required additional texts. These should be at least two pages long and demonstrate a basic knowledge of the author's point of view, combined with your own opinions and experiences. **Do not simply repeat what the writer said, you need to show how you might apply lessons learned from the text to your own ministry.**

2. Participation in Forums and Group Work (25%): Each student will participate in the forum discussion each week by posting and answer to a given question or thought (50 to 75 words per posting please) and responding to at least two other postings by their classmates in a substantive way.

3. Mid-Term Exam (25%): There will be two components of this test. First will be an online test covering key terms and ideas from the Jandt text. Second will be a case study, where I will ask you to apply what you have learned to a specific case and suggest how you might go about introducing the Gospel in that particular context.

4. Cross-Cultural Informant Project (30%): Cross-cultural communication is all about communication, so we cannot be limited to work on the computer. Each of you will find some person in your area, a friend or an acquaintance, who is from another culture and ideally came to the U.S. fairly recently. Check with the professor if you are unsure if your informant is acceptable for this project. Throughout the class, there will be five exercises which you must do with the same cultural informant. You must arrange the time and be sure your informant is willing to help. After each exercise you should take notes about the experience. Research the culture your informant is from and write a final research paper about this culture, what you learned from your experience with this informant, and how you might go about communicating the Gospel to people from this cultural background. This paper should be at least 5 pages in length.

5. Extra Credit (up to 5 points total): For extra credit, you may choose one of the following novels. Read the novel and reflect on the question next to that novel. This should be about three pages in length and is due by the last week of class.

a. **Saving Fish from Drowning** by Amy Tan. In this novel, a group of American tourists travel through China and

Burma with the ghost of the deceased Chinese lady who planned the tour. Chaos, comedy, and tragedy result due to multiple cross-communication blunders. *Question for reflection: What cross-cultural communication errors occur and how might an understanding of the culture helped avoid the ending tragedy?*

b. **Joy Luck Club** by Amy Tan. In this novel, four Chinese women immigrants try to understand and deal with their Americanized daughters, but find communication to be a complicated process. *Question for reflection: What are some of the cross-cultural communication problems between the women and their daughters and how can their conflicts be addressed?*

c. **House of the Spirits** by Isabelle Allende. In this novel, the Chilean writer examines an entire family held together by various tragedies and eccentricities. *Questions for reflection: How does the entire approach of this book reflect a different way of seeing the world, especially in comparison with how you might have written the same story? What do you think this says about a Hispanic worldview?*

d. Check with me if you would like to read another book. My requirements are that the book be written by someone from another culture and that it has some relevant importance to understanding another cultural worldview or cross-cultural communication. **If you choose a different book, I need to approve it before you submit a paper.**

Expectations

What you can expect from me:

1. I will have all of your materials and assignments on-line by 12 noon (Eastern Time) at the start of every week.
2. I will be interacting with the course a minimum of two days a week and usually more (I am often on the computer everyday, except for weekends). I will try to respond to your emails within 48 hours on a first come, first serve basis. If a post is marked "Urgent" I will try to respond faster, but please only use this approach if it is extremely important.
3. I will monitor the class forums and enter and participate when I feel it is important to steer the conversation or to respond to important issues which are raised. I may not enter all discussions, especially if I feel you are all learning important material from your discussions with each other. Sometimes self-discovery is the best way to learn.
4. I will provide timely and substantive feedback on all graded assignments. Assignments turned in on time have priority and should be graded and returned within a week or two.
5. If I need to be away from the computer for an extended period of time, I will let you know in advance if possible.
6. I am fairly new to ExL teaching and as such I expect to make the occasional blunder as I try to find the best way to teach using this medium, I ask for your patience and sincere criticism, if you feel I can improve this class in any way to enhance your learning experience.
7. I will pray for each of you by name throughout the semester and ask that you do the same for me.

What I expect from you:

1. You will actively participate in this classroom. Our classroom is electronic but real, and we will be interacting with each other. Each week you will find that my expectations for you are outlined in the class forums and assignments.
2. You will invest the same amount of time in this class as if you were on a physical campus. On a physical campus you would be in class for three hours, plus outside time for reading and assignments. Please make room for at least 10-12 hours of reading, reflecting, discussions, participating, and writing each week.
3. You will post your thoughts to the rest of the course through the course forums. We want to learn from your experience and wisdom too, so please do not keep quiet when you may have something important to say which we need to hear.
4. If you need to be away from the computer for an extended period of time or if a crisis or emergency hits your household, please let us know as soon as possible. Then we can discuss your needs and also lift you up in prayer. Please don't wait until the last minute to talk to me about any concerns you may have.
5. Pray for your classmates and me by name throughout this semester. We need all the help we can get!

Course Assessment

Grading:

Grading for this class will follow the guidelines posted in the ATS Academic Catalog. Remember that a good grade for an ATS class is a "B." The posted grading scale is as follows:

A 95-100% Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
A- 90-94.9%

B+ 87-89.9%
 B 83-86.9% Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
 B- 80-82.9%
 C+ 77-79.9%
 C 73-76.9% Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
 C- 70-72.9%
 D+ 67-69.9%
 D 63-66.9% Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
 D- 60-62.9%
 F Below 60 Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

Incomplete Work:

"A grade of 'I' denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment. If the work of the course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as 'F.' " (See ATS Catalog)

Attendance and Late Work:

It is expected that each student will "attend" class each week. The only way for me to know that you are "attending" class is for you to interact with the forum each week. This means you should post a response to the forum discussion each week and comment on at least two other posting by your fellow students. These must be significant postings, responses such as "I agree with everything he/she said" is not considered significant for graduate level discussion and will indicate to me that you are not interacting with your reading. "Absences" or delays in submitting assignments will be permitted only under extreme circumstances and must be arranged in advance.

Assignments:

All assignments are due by the stated due dates. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a C, etc.

Postings:

Please limit all postings to between 50 and 75 words, unless directed to do otherwise.

Discussion:

A crucial element of this course is the dialog that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

Online etiquette:

Remember that online, we do not have the benefit of your non-verbal cues, such as your tone of voice and body language. Try to avoid sarcasm as this may not come across as intended.

Please use gender inclusive language in all of your posts. Also use appropriate language and professional grammar, while at the same time trying to communicate in a brief manner. While I will not be specifically looking for spelling or grammatical errors, such mistakes are not expected at the graduate level of academic professionalism and will tend to lower your grade.

Online Section Descriptions and Communication Guidelines

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into <http://one.asburyseminary.edu> and clicking on the Virtual Campus tab (upper right corner) you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The **Course Information Center** contains many features to be used throughout the semester:
 - a) **Course News and Announcements**, where I will post items important for the entire class;
 - b) **Syllabus**, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;
 - c) **To Professor**, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;
 - d) **Course Questions**, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about

the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;

- e) **Prayer Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;
 - f) **Open Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.
2. **Modules**, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.

Virtual Support Contact Information

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and Virtual media** contact Information Commons:
Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the Virtual program**, contact Dale Hale:
ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2393

Accessing Information Commons Materials

1. General Questions:

- a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm>

2. Materials Requests:

- a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:
<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm>
- b. Virtual Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
- c. Virtual students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:

- a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

- a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

Copyright Policies

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